

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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CHAPTER XII.

"It will be better for me to creep quietly away now," said Lois, speaking hurriedly, as the door closed on Lady Joan, and she found herself alone with Herrick. "I can be of no use to any one. I should only feel myself in the way."

Herrick's face showed simple blank astonishment.

"In the way!" he repeated. "Going! You mean to leave us in the very midst of our sorrow."

He felt as one might feel who, overtaken by a flood, and planting his feet on what he thinks a rock, suddenly feels it crumbling into sand beneath him.

Lois tried to explain.

"I would give worlds—worlds if I could be of use—of comfort to—to you all; but—but—" she faltered, and broke off abruptly.

With a heart filled as hers was at the moment with conflicting emotions, it was difficult to let forth even one little scrap of feeling without suffering all to escape.

Herrick stood for a moment, steadily looking at her, trying to gather the real meaning of her words from her flushing, tearful face. There could be but one, it seemed to him.

"I don't think you quite understand, dear," he said, sadly, "the greatness of the sorrow that is coming upon us. It has not been made clear to you that by this

time to-morrow death will have entered our house."

That must be what it was; she did not realise the blackness of the overhanging cloud. It was not only that she was little more than a child in years, she had led so secluded a life, knew so little of the deeper joys or sorrows of life, that she was even below her years in development.

Her mouth quivered, great tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Oh, Herrick," she cried, clasping her hands, and looking up in his face, "if only I could bear it for you!"

Herrick's calmness began to give way.

"No one could do that. No one knows what my father has been to me all my life through," he said, unsteadily. And then he sank into the chair which she had just quitted, hiding his face in both hands.

Lois could see the tears trickling through his fingers. She bent over him, putting her arm round his neck; words failed her.

"Oh, Herrick, my poor boy, my poor boy!" was all she could find to say.

The difference in their years seemed to vanish. She felt mother-like over him, strong and protective, ready to fight sorrow—death itself, with her little hands, should either dare to approach him.

For a few minutes Herrick wrestled silently with his grief, and Lois stood bending over him, caressing his dark-brown hair, and finding no better words of comfort than:

"My poor, poor boy! If only I could bear it for you!"

Deep down in her heart was another and bitterer cry:

"Can I go away and leave him to bear his sorrow alone? Can there be another

in the whole world who could comfort him as I would?"

It was altogether a new experience to see Herrick thus overcome with grief. As a rule, his young vigour and masterfulness were the things that first and foremost made themselves felt when he entered a room. Face to face with him and his masterfulness it had been comparatively easy for her to persuade herself that he could get on very well through life without the aid of such a poor, little, insignificant creature as herself. But now, with him brought thus low, her heart had but one cry in it: "I love him so, I cannot, cannot give him up."

The room was so still that the loud ticking of a clock on a pedestal in a corner seemed to speak as with a warning voice: "I am telling, one by one, the seconds of that life which so soon will be all told." Herrick could fancy it cried aloud to him. He withdrew his hands from his face. It looked haggard and aged by a dozen years.

"Forgive me, Lois," he said, brokenly. "I ought not to give way like this—so much devolves upon me."

Even as he spoke his words were to be verified, for a servant entered, bringing a message. The manager from the Wrexford mines was wishing to see Mr. Herrick; he apologised very much for intruding at such a time; but to-morrow would be pay-day for the miners, and it would cause great inconvenience to the men if they were not paid. Did Mr. Herrick know if the cheque which was handed over regularly every month had been signed, so that he could draw upon it?

With the message the servant delivered a note from Parsons, asking if Mr. Herrick would, as soon as possible, pay a visit to his grandfather. The terrible news had not as yet been told him, and his enquiries as to what had detained Mr. Gaskell so long at Wrexford were incessant.

Herrick stood for a moment in thought over this note. "Yes, he must be told," he said presently, with a sigh. The message from the Wrexford manager, coming simultaneously with the note from Parsons, brought before his mind the fact that business relations might render it imperative that the painful tidings should be broken to the old man.

"But Dr. Scott must be present," he decided. Then he turned to Lois:

"Wait here, Lois. I shall like you to come in to my grandfather presently. You

may be able to say some word of comfort to him. I will come for you in a few minutes."

Lois, in silence, shrank back into her corner once more. With Herrick gone, the room seemed to resume its distinctive character as Lady Joan's boudoir. She felt strangely out of place amid these ancestral surroundings. The aristocratic portraits on the walls seemed, with their thin lips, to repeat Lady Joan's cold, cruel words: "I consider that a marriage between you and my son would be about the most disastrous thing that could happen to him;" while all the four corners of the room, with their luxurious fittings and works of art, seemed to cry out at her in chorus: "It would sow dissension between him and his relatives; it would prevent him making a marriage suitable to his station in life."

Even the loud-voiced marqueterie clock on its high pedestal, which had seemed to bring a message to Herrick, had one for her now, and ticked away to a refrain—what was it, the ending of a poem, or of an old song she had heard somewhere?—"I love thee so, dear, that I only can leave thee."

CHAPTER XIII.

HERRICK performed his dreary task as gently as possible.

At first old Mr. Gaskell did not seem to catch the full import of Herrick's silence in response to his eager question: "But tell me, his injuries are not serious?"

Then, as the truth flashed into his mind, he fell back in his easy-chair, moaning pitifully:

"My boy John, my stalwart laddie to go first after all!"

Dr. Scott came forward with a cordial draught, but the old man waved him on one side, saying that he was tired, and would go to bed.

"Let me get to sleep, let me get to sleep," he said; "it's all I want."

"Come now, Lois," said Herrick, about ten minutes after beckoning Lois to follow him to his grandfather's room.

It seemed to the young man that every one, aged or youthful, could not fail to respond to sweet Lois's gentle sympathy.

Lois followed him readily enough; wherever he led it was easy enough for her to follow; but alas for her, if he were not there to lead, and her fears or her love chose to show the way!

When they entered his room, the old

man was lying back on his pillows with closed eyes; his thin fingers beat restlessly on the coverlet; while ever and anon a feeble moan, as from one in pain, escaped his lips.

Herrick noted sadly that a change had passed over the aged, shrunken face, even during the brief space of time that he had been out of the room.

"Grandfather," he said, gently, "I have brought Lois to see you. Don't you remember—I introduced her to you on—on your birthday?"

It needed an effort of memory on the young man's part to remember when that birthday was. It seemed to him that a lifetime, not barely two days, had elapsed since, light-hearted and full of hope, he had brought Lois to his grandfather's side to receive and to offer congratulations.

The old man slowly opened his eyes; there was a dreamy, far-away look in them.

"Take off your hat, dear," whispered Herrick, "and let my grandfather see your face."

Lois did so; then, as if moved by a sudden impulse, she laid her soft cheek, all wet with tears, upon the old man's thin hand.

"Heaven bless you, my child!" he murmured softly.

There came a sudden look of deep tenderness into his eyes; it as suddenly faded, swept away by one of keen annoyance—one might almost say of anger—which overspread his countenance.

Old Mr. Gaskell's bedroom led into his dressing-room, this again opened into the room to which his son had been hastily carried.

Suddenly and softly the door leading into this dressing-room had been opened, and Lady Joan had looked in.

Lois's instincts must have been strangely at one with those of the old man beside whom she sat, for though her back was towards this door, and the handle had been turned without a sound, she felt Lady Joan's presence on the threshold, and in a flash of thought she attributed old Mr. Gaskell's sudden change of expression to its right cause.

Silently, as she had come, Lady Joan closed the door and departed, saying never a word.

Herrick, not possessing Lois's quickness of perception, heard and saw nothing.

"Does Lady Joan want you—me—anything, do you think?" Lois asked him in a low tone.

"Perhaps my father may have recovered consciousness, and wishes to see me," answered Herrick, eagerly, a wild hope springing up in his heart that, after all, this much of mercy might be granted him, and he might, once again, hear his father's loved voice.

He beckoned to Parsons to place a chair for Lois beside the grandfather's bed, and hastened to his father's room by way of the corridor.

His hope was but short-lived. One look into John Gaskell's face—on which one moment of agony had set its seal—convinced him that his heavy insensibility remained unbroken.

Dr. Scott was in the room.

"It is partly the result of the opiate," he said, "which we have been compelled to administer. Then looking hurriedly round to see that they were alone, he added: "Get your mother out of the room into the fresh air for a few minutes. Her strength is being severely taxed. She has been wandering restlessly from room to room for the past quarter of an hour."

While he was speaking, Lady Joan re-entered. Her step was slow and uncertain. To Herrick's fancy, she seemed strangely preoccupied. He could almost have fancied her to be some soulless piece of machinery wound up to go through certain performances for a given time, so automatic and unreal her movements seemed.

"Mother," he said, drawing her away from the sick-bed to a window recess, "I'll stay here while you get a little fresh air. Your strength won't stand this for long together."

She scarcely seemed to hear him; but, looking beyond him, addressed Dr. Scott:

"Have you seen old Mr. Gaskell, lately—since he heard the bad news, I mean?" she asked. "Has it had a bad effect upon him, do you think?"

"I was present when your son broke the news to him," answered the doctor. "I can scarcely say yet what effect it may have had. I am going in to see him again shortly."

"Go now, if you please; I am anxious to know," she said in low tones.

"Mother," said Herrick, "I want Lois to stay in the house now she is here. Will you send a message to Summerhill, or shall I?"

"I want Lois!"

Lady Joan repeated the words. It seemed to her that the young man had spoken them with a good deal of authority,

as if he were already preparing to take up his position as master of the house.

"Yes," said Herrick with great decision, "I want Lois to stay in the house. Her presence here is a comfort to me and to my grandfather; I hope it will be also to you. Shall I send a man over to tell Mrs. Leyton not to expect her back to-day?"

Lady Joan did not reply for a moment, and Herrick had to repeat the question.

"Shall I send to Summerhill, or will you?"

"You will do as you please," presently she answered, coldly and formally. "The house is large. If she remains here, pray keep her away from these rooms."

Then she turned away from him and went into the adjoining room—the one intervening between the two sick-rooms—and stood waiting there for Dr. Scott's reappearance.

Herrick took her place beside his father's bed. "She is unlike herself to-day, and no wonder," he thought. "She shall not be distressed by word or deed of mine. By-and-by I can fight Lois's battles easily enough. My poor father, my poor father, he is the only one to think of now!" and the young man laid his head on the pillow on which lay John Gaskell's white face in its whiter bandages, and sent up a heart-broken prayer to Heaven that those dear, blue eyes now so closely sealed might, if only for a moment, open once again and rest on his face with a gleam of recognition in them.

Presently, the voices of Lady Joan and the doctor in the adjoining room fell upon his ear.

"You think a change has set in?" Lady Joan was saying.

"I do," was the doctor's reply, in sad tones. "A very marked change for the worse. His pulse is by many degrees feebler; his temperature is lower."

"Is there any immediate danger?" asked Lady Joan.

The doctor paused before replying. Then he said, slowly:

"It is a difficult question to answer. I have seen him very low before, and he has rallied. A great deal depends upon the amount of nourishment he can be induced to take. At his great age, one cannot expect much warning of the approaching end. I know you like me to be frank with you, Lady Joan; my own impression is that his last hour will be sudden and painless."

Lady Joan's voice was unlike her own as she asked the next question:

"Will he go before my husband, do you think?"

"Heaven only knows," replied the doctor, solemnly. "Send for another doctor, and have a second opinion, Lady Joan." He broke off for a moment, and then added, sadly: "I may be wrong; but it seems to me, as I go from one sick-room to the other, that it is a race between the two, with death for the goal. Heaven only knows who'll reach it first!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE twenty-four hours that were, as the doctor had phrased it, "to see the end of it," were swiftly and surely ebbing themselves out; the hot morning wore away into a hotter afternoon; the storm seemed to draw near and nearer, but still it did not break.

No appreciable change took place in John Gaskell's condition; the narcotics acted powerfully upon him, and he appeared slowly and imperceptibly to be passing over the border which divides sleep from coma.

Old Mr. Gaskell also remained in much the same condition. He had ceased to moan over his "stalwart laddie," and now lay still and quiet, with his hand clasping Lois's, like some tired child being soothed to sleep.

Lois's presence at his bedside was so evidently a comfort to him, that Herrick, in spite of his mother's request that the young girl should be kept away from that suite of rooms, did not like to disturb her.

It was a difficult subject to mention to Lady Joan, without a display of feeling which would be most unseemly in the circumstances. So he let matters take their course, hoping and believing that when his mother saw how manifestly Lois had won his grandfather's favour, her request would not be repeated.

His presence for the nonce was not needed in either sick-room. All sorts of tiresome business details claimed his attention that afternoon; the state of confusion into which the colliery at Wrexford had been thrown by the explosion, called for the presence of one of the proprietors on the spot. As this, however, in the present sad condition of things was an impossibility, Herrick did what he could by means of telegrams, and all through the early afternoon the wires between Longridge and Wrexford were working incessantly.

It was not until close upon five o'clock that he found himself free to return to the dying beds of his father and grandfather. When he entered his grandfather's room the old man appeared to be dozing. The look on Lois's face—always so easy to read—puzzled him. She looked startled and pained at one and the same moment, as if something had occurred which had frightened and troubled her.

"You have been sitting here too long, darling," he said, in a low voice; "come for a few minutes out on the terrace."

Then he whispered a word to Parsons, that if his grandfather aroused, and enquired for Miss White, she was to send for her immediately.

The terrace was easily reached by any one of the long French windows of the grandfather's suite of rooms. The sun was on the other side of the Castle now, and the slanting shadows gave refuge from the intense heat.

"What is it, Lois—what has troubled you?" was, naturally enough, Herrick's first question, when they found themselves alone in the open air.

Lois seemed greatly disturbed.

"Oh, Herrick," she said, in low, vehement tones, "I feel—I know—I ought not to speak as I am going to speak—but tell me, has your grandfather any reason to dislike Lady Joan?"

Herrick's face changed.

"There has never, to my knowledge," he answered, "been any open quarrel between them, although, I am sure, you will easily understand that two people so opposite in character could never be expected to get on particularly well together. But why do you ask, dear? What has happened to put such a thought into your head?"

"Nothing much has happened. I dare say I'm wrong to lay stress on such a simple thing; but twice, while I've been sitting beside Mr. Gaskell, Lady Joan has opened the door leading from the dressing-room, and looked in."

"Well?"

"And each time I knew that she was there without turning my head, by the look which passed over Mr. Gaskell's face and the way in which he clutched—yes, clutched my hand."

Herrick did not speak for a moment. Lois went on:

"He looked—I scarcely know how to explain—like some one who was having a bad dream. He only opened his eyes

for half a moment the first time; the second time he did not open his eyes at all, only seemed to feel that she was there looking at him; and he held my hand so tightly and muttered something. I could scarcely hear what it was; but I think it was, 'Don't leave me, my child.'"

"Did my mother say anything?"

"Not a word; but, oh, Herrick, when I turned and looked at her she looked so dark and so—so unlike herself, that I could have fancied that another soul had taken possession of her body."

Herrick could see a reason, of which Lois knew nothing, for what she called a "dark" look on his mother's face. To his mind, it was evident that Lady Joan had looked into the room to see if her wishes had been attended to, and Lois had been requested to withdraw. Finding the contrary to be the case, her feeling of annoyance had no doubt showed in the expression of her countenance. The look on his grandfather's face, as described by Lois, was to him inexplicable. Surely she must have allowed her imagination to run away with her.

He felt perplexed. It seemed to him that the slightest wish of the old man, now lying at the gates of death, should be complied with. Yet his mother, with this terrible sorrow hanging over her, must have due consideration shown to her. It was hard to know what to do for the best. The next moment his course was to be decided for him.

"My lady wishes to speak to you, sir. She is in the library," said a servant at that moment approaching.

"Wait here for me, Lois; the fresh air will do you good," said Herrick, as he prepared to comply with his mother's summons. "Don't be afraid, dear; I shan't betray your confidences."

The library was on the ground floor. Herrick found Lady Joan standing just within the room, with, what he was willing to admit, was a very "dark" look, indeed, on her face.

"Is this a time to think of marrying and giving in marriage?" she asked, sternly, before he had time to open his lips. "Have you done well, do you think, in forcing upon me, at such a time as this, the presence of a young woman who is distasteful to me?"

Herrick felt his temper aroused.

"Forcing upon you! Distasteful to you! I do not understand!" he cried, hotly. Then his better angel conquered;

he bit his lip and restrained himself. "This is not a time for bickering and contention, at any rate," he said; "that at least can wait. Lois I found in the house, when I returned home—I supposed she was brought here by your wish, or my grandfather's. Whether this was, or was not, the case, one thing is clear, my grandfather likes to have her beside him, and I am sure you will so far respect his wishes as to allow her to remain in his room."

Lady Joan laid her hand upon his arm. "Listen, Herrick, I have only five minutes to spare from your father's dying bed, and I have something to say to you which must—must be attended to. I suppose this young lady, of whom we have already spoken, is to remain here for the night?"

"Assuredly," answered Herrick; "I have sent a message to Summerhill to that effect."

"Very well. You have acted in the way in which, I suppose, you think you have a right to act; now I intend to act in the way in which I have an undoubted right to act. The sick-rooms are under my supervision—both of them, in all their arrangements, and I positively forbid the entry of—that young woman into any one of that suite of rooms. I have already given Parsons orders to that effect."

As she finished speaking she left the room, and Herrick, exasperated though he might be at her sentence, yet felt that in the circumstances there could be no appeal from it.

ON THE EMBANKMENT.

ABOUT SOMERSET HOUSE.

STRANDED high and dry above the river—literally on the Strand—and yet with reminders of its former river-side character, lies Somerset House. From the Embankment we see little of it but the dull and heavy rustic basement, once washed by the tide in its ebb and flow; with its water-gate and water-stairs suggesting the time—not so very distant, although before the age of omnibuses and railways—when a Lord of the Admiralty might drop down from Whitehall to the Transport Office in a Government barge, or, a Commissioner of Taxes might evade the duty on carriages and livery servants, by coming down to his office in his own private wherry. Above the rustic basement is a terrace, which no one ever uses, and, above that, rises the heavy, rather than stately, frontage of

Somerset House itself, with its innumerable windows, out of which nobody ever looks. Destiny indeed, with singular irony, has placed here a dull row of public offices, upon one of the finest and most brilliant sites in London: the site of the once-charming palace of which Cowley writes:

Before my gates a Street's broad Channel goes,
Which still with Waves of crowding people flows,
And every day there passes by my side
Up to its western reach the London tide,
The Spring Tides of the Term; my Front looks
down,
On all the Pride and Business of the Town.

The beauty and convenience of the site—half way between Court and City—attracted the attention of Seymour, the proud Duke of Somerset, Protector of the realm during the minority of his nephew, Edward the Sixth. The ground was then partly occupied by certain buildings, called Chester's Inn, which had formerly been the town residence of the Bishops of Chester. The parish church of St. Mary Innocents also stood there. These buildings were swept away to make room for the Protector's stately mansion, some of the materials for which were obtained by pulling down the old church of the Knights of St. John, in Clerkenwell. The new building had a castellated front towards the river: castellated, that is, after the then prevalent domestic type, with wide bay windows and oriels, overlooking the river, with a broad terrace between, and a pleasant, if formal, garden.

Somerset's occupation of his new palace was but a short one; and, after his fall, the pride and ostentation of his building operations were urged against him as corroborative evidence of his dangerous ambition. At the Duke's attainder and execution, Somerset House fell to the Crown, and was assigned to the Princess Elizabeth. From that time it was reckoned as one of the Royal Palaces; and when Elizabeth came to the throne, she occasionally held her court here; and it was at Somerset House that the Queen handed to Sir Nicholas Bacon the Great Seal, as Lord Keeper. But it was never a favourite residence with Elizabeth; and, when she made her cousin, Carey, Lord Hunsdon, keeper of the palace, she seems to have abandoned the place to his use, except that it might be prepared occasionally for the reception of some Ambassador or foreign Prince.

Lord Hunsdon died at Somerset House, and his widow was thereupon appointed keeper with a fee of twelvepence a day

for the house and sixpence for the garden. Only charwoman's wages, to the apprehension of the present time. But that the post was worth having is evident, for the next appointment is that of the shrewd statesman Robert Cecil, the future Earl of Salisbury, who, in 1603, was appointed "Keeper of Somerset House in the Strand."

This appointment reveals the curious fact that John Gerard—a famous surgeon and herbalist of the period—had a garden plot in the palace grounds, where he grew herbs and simples, flowers and fruit, with which he undertook to supply the Queen Consort on the renewal of his lease. But Gerard's tenancy ceased before 1611, when the whole garden was surrendered to the Queen.

At the accession of the Stuart dynasty, Somerset House had been assigned to Anne of Denmark, the somewhat coarse and unprepossessing wife of King James; and it was often filled by a noisy, carousing crew from her native land. The King of Denmark—the Queen's brother—had many a Royal bout of drinking here, with King James, whose wisdom was not proof against the seductions of the wine cup.

In honour of the Queen, it was determined to change the name of the palace to Denmark House, and by this name it appears in the official correspondence of the period. But the new name did not stick; and before long the Court conformed to popular usage, and Somerset House was once more in the ascendant.

In the time of this Danish Anne, Somerset House was very much altered and remodelled. The gardens were newly arranged, and planted with all kinds of salutary herbs, the services of William Goodrowse, serjeant-surgeon, in that respect being recompensed with the handsome fee of four hundred pounds. That excellent architect, Inigo Jones, took the buildings in hand, and, leaving the river-front unaltered, he remodelled the interior courts, and newly fronted the building towards the Strand. This last was the façade, familiar to our ancestors during the past century, and of which many prints are in existence, showing it as it then existed, battered, patched, and homely, but with some traces of former dignity and florid comeliness, although altogether neglected and forlorn.

After Queen Consort Anne's death at Hampton Court in 1619, Somerset House became once more an occasional lodging-

place for Ambassadors and princely guests, and was also occupied by a crowd of people more or less connected with the Court, from whom no doubt the under-keeper—then one Richard Brown—as well as his principal, Viscount Purbeck, received some kind of advantage. A great consternation there must have been among all these squatters when, in 1623, orders came to clear everybody out, and prepare the place for the reception of the Infanta of Spain, whom the Prince of Wales, then on his romantic Spanish expedition, was expected to bring home with him.

But there was a respite for all the crowd of genteel hangers-on, the gentlemen with cloaks and ruffs, and long swords, and the ladies in stomachers and stiff brocades—the Spanish marriage was off, and Somerset House was itself again. But the talk was now of the Prince's marriage with a daughter of France, and the affair was almost concluded, when the old King died, and his body was brought to Somerset House to lie there in State till it should be borne thence to Westminster Abbey. And when that melancholy business was finished, there was a general clearance to make the place ready for Henrietta Maria, the coming Queen.

A young and lively Queen at Somerset House turned the place almost upside down. She would have pastorals there, and all kinds of masques and diversions. And then the place became a sort of petty France, thronged with friars, priests, and French servants of all kinds, till King Charles, churlishly enough, packed off the bulk of the Queen's followers, and shipped them back to France. But mass was still performed in the little chapel, which had indeed been arranged for in the marriage treaty; and Capucin Fathers paced the green alleys of the stately gardens, and occupied themselves with planting and delving thereabouts. At a later date, the author of "Sylva" mentions with approval, "a cloyster of the right French elm in the little garden near to Her Majesty's the Queen Mother's chapel at Somerset House, which were, I suppose, planted there by the industry of the French Fathers, incomparable for shade and delight."

Another notable figure in Henrietta's time was "Little Geoffrey," the Queen's dwarf, who one day fell out of a window at Somerset House, when "the Queen took it so heavily that she attired not herself that day." But the dwarf must have got over this sad mishap, if he be the same Geoffrey Hudson, who, at a later date,

while sharing the Queen's exile in France, challenged and shot one Mr. Cutts for making fun of him.

As might have been expected, the Roman Catholic Chapel and the priests caused much heart-burning among the jealous Protestant citizens of London, and the somewhat bigoted 'prentice boys more than once threatened to pull down the place. Still more indignation was felt when the chapel was reconstructed on a grander scale, in the florid Franco-Italian style then prevalent, and at a cost of four thousand pounds. In the same year, 1635, some one proposed to build a bathing-palace, a great floating-bath, and to moor it opposite Somerset House. But this project is only on the point of being realised in the present year of grace, 1890.

And then came the civil war, to hurry on which Somerset House had helped a little, from the unpopularity of poor Henrietta's devotions and diversions; and the place shared the fate of other Royal Palaces in being appropriated to public uses, and as lodgings for officers and soldiers of the Parliamentary army. But the Lord Protector's body lay there in state, and was honoured with a magnificent funeral procession to Westminster Abbey. Though some will have it that, anticipating the coming reaction, Oliver's friends conveyed the body away to a place of secret sepulture—a secret said to be known to an existing family of distinction, and that the corpse that underwent the magnificent funeral, and that was dug up and gibbeted at the Restoration, was really that of some obscure defunct during the troubled days that followed Oliver's death.

And Pepys tells us of a mutiny of soldiers at Somerset House, a formidable affair under the unsettled conditions prevailing, but which was accommodated by the promise of pay and provisions.

With the Restoration came back to the old palace Henrietta, older and sadder, and perhaps wiser than during her previous tenancy of Somerset House. She found the place all dilapidated and dismantled, and she set to work to rebuild the interior courts of the palace.

This by the Queen herself designed,
Gives us a pattern of her mind.

Thus writes Edmund Waller, who not many years before had written an eloquent ode on the death of Cromwell, in a poem upon Her Majesty's new buildings at Somerset House. The result was a

composite and mixed interior, with colonnades and openings of somewhat oriental appearance, an ensemble not without its charm when brightened up by cavaliers in their silken doublets, plumed hats, and fluttering ribbons, and by the beauties of the Court in the rich and elegant toilette of the period. Brightly before the windows, too, stretched the shining river; and the charm of the prospect and the commanding nature of the site is noted by our poet:

That the fair view her window yields,
The town, the river, and the fields,
Ent'ring beneath us we descry,
And wonder how we come so high.

Once more the Capucin Fathers were to be seen about the shaded walks of the garden; and the deserted chapel, where the Puritans we may be sure had spared little in the way of images and painted glass, once more resounded to the music of the sacred offices. The chapel, too, became the resort of the aristocratic members of the old faith, and the focus of a harmless propaganda. Burials, too, by especial favour, were allowed within its walls.

But the pleasant social Court of the Queen Mother was broken up, and Henrietta Maria departed to return no more. Then the palace was occupied by the much-neglected wife of Charles the Second. It was in her time that the barbarous persecution of the Catholics broke out under the pretext of a Popish plot; and at Somerset House, according to popular report, that active magistrate, Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, was murdered; and several of the Queen's servants were executed on the slenderest evidence. After the death of Charles, the Queen abandoned her palace; and from that time the State apartments, desolate and unused, gradually passed into a state of ruin and decay.

During the greater part of the eighteenth century, Somerset House, or the habitable part of it, was occupied by the families of minor officials connected with the Court or Royal Service. One Carrington, a King's messenger, had apartments there, when the century was middle-aged, whose daughter married George Garrick, the brother of the famous David—his shadow, so to speak, and his factotum at old Drury—and George took up his residence with his father-in-law, and the names of several of his children appear in the Register of Baptisms of Somerset House Chapel. For the chapel was still a Chapel

Royal, converted to the established religion in 1711, with a resident chaplain, the Rev. Lewis Bruce holding that office in 1745, and preaching zealously against the evils of Popery, as evidenced in the lamentable rebellion then prevalent in Scotland. Marriages, too, were celebrated there, as well as baptisms, and, occasionally, burials still took place within its walls; but these celebrations seem to have been chiefly confined to those who were, or had been, officially connected with the place.

All this time, Somerset House was nominally the Queen's Palace; but the Queens of the reigning dynasty would have none of it. And in 1775, Buckingham House was bought and given to the Queen—honest Charlotte, the homely spouse of farmer George—instead of Somerset House, which was henceforth to be devoted to public purposes. Some beginning towards this end had already been made, for, in 1770, the second annual exhibition of the Royal Academy of Painting was held within the walls of old Somerset House—a long-drawn link, this, between past and present. The modest exhibition of those days did not disdain the crude productions of amateurs "of distinction," and the Academicians actually apologise in their first catalogue for taking people's shillings—a measure only adopted in order to exclude improper characters. But, modest as was the show, it was graced with such names as Reynolds, Gainsborough, and, at a long distance behind, Wilson and Benj. West. Bartolozzi, too, appeared in chalks, and Angelica Kauffman, R.A., shows conspicuously in the catalogue, probably, like Pope Joan among the hierarchy, the solitary example of an Academician in petticoats; that is, as far as we have gone at present.

But in 1775, the old building came down with a clatter. For towards the end of 1775, the destroyers were let loose upon old Somerset House. Those portions of the structure which Inigo Jones had altered and Queen Henrietta Maria had repaired, were still in a habitable condition. But the remains of Somerset's old palace, including the river front and an adjoining wing, had been unoccupied for more than three-quarters of a century. The roof had fallen in at places; the wind whistled and howled through broken windows, and howled through desolate corridors and gloomy entries. All this part was reputed to be haunted, as well it might be. Two great folding doors—reputed not to have

been opened within living memory—gave access to this gloomy abode. When these were broken open, they gave admittance to a long gallery overlooking the water-garden, all dusty and dismantled, but showing traces everywhere of its former Royal occupation. Tattered hangings rotted on the walls; fragments of regal canopies; broken morsels of gilded furniture were scattered here and there; the rags and tatters of the old monarchy strewn the floor; nothing had been touched since the days of the Stuarts; and presently the whole *débris*, which fell to dust at a touch, was buried in the ruins of the falling structure.

The King's architect, Sir William Chambers, made a clean sweep of the whole building. He built an embankment and terrace upon the site of the old garden—that garden which veterans, living in the early Victorian age, still remembered, reached by dark, winding steps leading down from the Strand, neglected, but full of repose, in solemn, peaceful contrast to the noisy, bustling street above.

In 1779, one of the sides of the quadrangle was completed, and, by 1790, the front facing the Strand was also finished. One solitary tradition, concerning the building of New Somerset House, has been handed down to posterity. A workman, it was said, fell from the roof, and would have been dashed to pieces on the pavement of the quadrangle below, but for his watch, which became jammed in one of the crevices of the stonework, and supported him till he was rescued from his perilous position. The watch was left there by the grateful workman as a kind of *ex voto* offering, and there it still remains, or did till lately.

Unluckily, however, this little story was discredited many years ago by evidence: that the watch dial was fixed in its place by somebody connected with the Royal Society, which occupied rooms in the opposite corner of the building, for the purpose of testing certain transit instruments. The question that remains is, who invented the story, and, while he was about it, why did he not make a better one.

While the Royal Society once occupied the corner to the left from the main entrance from the Strand, its doorway appropriately crowned with the head of Sir Isaac Newton, the Royal Academy had its quarters to the right, under the equally appropriate sign of Michael Angelo. And here for many years the annual exhibition

was continued till, outgrowing its quarters, the Academy removed to the buildings of the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. Originally, too, there was other human interest in the precincts of Somerset House. A lottery-office there was, suggesting hopes of future wealth in return for a moderate investment. There was a Privy Seal office, and the Privy Seal might be affixed to a lucrative sinecure; and in one corner was an office of lights and beacons, frequented by jovial sailors and humorous sea captains, while the same pleasant salt flavour attached to the Naval Transport Office.

But in the present day there are few cheerful associations attaching to Somerset House. In the old rooms of the Royal Society are kept the huge, fateful volumes which record your entrance into the world, and which, at some time or other, will as surely note your departure from it. But the Registrar-General records have a dead and gone suggestion about them; and no more cheerful prospect is offered by the entrance to the Probate Office in the opposite corner, a corner haunted by disconsolate widows and disappointed expectants of legacies. And a search for a will is not an enlivening experience. Nor the reading of a will when found, in the dull, cheerless room, at the long table, presided over by two lynx-eyed clerks, who keep a watch upon you lest you should purloin a document, or surreptitiously copy some of its contents. Yet even here a little bit of human nature sometimes crops up. As when Farmer Brown, his weather-beaten face almost purple with excitement, jumps up and shakes a will defiantly in the face of the presiding official. "This here aren't my uncle's real will; there's another, a juster one, I want to see that." In vain the clerk informs him, with pitiless logic, that there can be only one "last will and testament," and that only by obtaining revocation of the probate of the existing document from the Court, can any other will be propounded. Poor Brown is very little satisfied with this explanation. He is firmly convinced that a better will than this is in existence somewhere, and he wants to have it looked for, "that's all."

Adjoining, too, is the Legacy Office, the name of which rings more cheerfully in the ears. But then, instead of helping people to legacies, it is only occupied in hunting down the trail of unpaid duties, and perhaps coming upon somebody for a startling lump of money, long after the inheritance has been spent. And then there

is the main body of Inland Revenue, intent on following up defaulters, and rendering taxation more productive by their diligence, which means for the outside world having more to pay. No, at the best, the associations of Somerset House are not of a gay or an agreeable character.

It should be remembered, too, that the west wing, in which the Inland Revenue is mainly located, and which was completed as recently as 1857, is beyond the limits of old Somerset House, and is built upon what was formerly part of the Savoy. And that the east wing, now occupied by King's College, was completed in 1829, after the designs of Smirke.

As a consequence of the steep natural declivity of the site towards the river, and the artificial level of the building, there is a considerable world below the surface at Somerset House, as anybody may judge who enters the quadrangle, where a group of something like statuary faces the visitor—figures which represent King George the Third, and the venerable Father Thames himself, figures which suggest a fountain, but which only preside over a yawning gulf in the way of an opening to the underground cellars. And in part of this underground world busy work is going on in the way of stamping, printing, and embossing the innumerable stamps of all kinds, which are used as well by the Post Office, the Courts of Law, and for general revenue purposes.

And in these lower regions, if anywhere, we may listen for faint echoes of the world that has passed away. Here should Seymour walk all ghastly from the scaffold; here the old ghosts of lords and dames,

Forth from their gloomy mansions creeping,
The Lady Janes and Joans repair,
And from the gallery stand peeping.

Where the chapel once was, and the tombs of the dead, the cloistered avenue, the physic garden, the tennis-court, the orchard, now presses thump, and machinery rattles. But how is it at night, when the busy world is gone, and the great, lone building is left to the policeman and night-watchman? Then, perhaps, we may picture the silent quadrangle as peopled with the shades of homeless wanderers who seek in vain their former haunts.

INTERNATIONAL COPYRIGHT.

THE copyrights and copy-wrongs of authors form an ancient and a fertile theme. It has at last touched the hearts

of American Congressmen to do something, but whether that something will altogether please the men of letters, may well be doubted. There is nothing very novel, however, about the International Copyright Bill, which, while we write, it is understood that the American House of Representatives have decided to adopt. It is very curious, by the way, that the Americans, who have always been so punctilious in the matter of patents—carefully preserving for the ingenious inventor a vested interest in the product of his hands—should until now have been so very indifferent to the vested interests of any man in the product of his brain. Still more remarkable is it that their laws carefully protect a man in the possession of land which he does not create, but do not equally protect him in the possession of a book which he does create.

We have the same inconsistency in this country, however, where private property in land is recognised in perpetuity, while private property in a patent or a copyright is recognised only for a limited, and in some cases an obviously inadequate, term of years. The worst of it is, too, that a patentee has to pay heavily for the privilege of enjoying the fruit of his own invention.

An author has not to pay for a title to his copyright, but he can only enjoy the right for forty-two years after the date of publication, or, alternatively, arrange that his heirs shall enjoy it for seven years after his death. What the American Bill proposes is, that British authors shall enjoy the same protection in the United States as American authors, provided that the books be set up, printed, and bound, wholly within the United States.

There is a fine touch of the Protectionist about this proposal. In effect, it amounts to an admission that the American Union cannot do without the intellect of the Mother Country, but will dispense with her handiwork wherever and whenever possible. To the British author it matters little, perhaps, where his book is printed, so long as he is secured in his share of the profit of the publication. But British authors are not always able to preserve their copyrights in their own hands; and British printers and publishers will by no means relish the idea of being compelled to reprint everything in America on which they desire to retain the copyright.

There was an alternative proposal in

President Cleveland's time, that foreign authors should be allowed to sell stamps, or certificates, to American publishers, empowering these last to issue specified numbers of copyrighted works. The proposal was ingenious; but it limited the author to a claim for ten per cent. of the selling price, while it did not allow him any voice in fixing the selling price or style of publication. The system must have been fatal to "éditions de luxe."

The times have gone when a man spends a lifetime in preparing a book for publication, like the *Alcuin Bible* in the British Museum; but many a man still, happily for the human race, spends a lifetime in collecting materials for and in writing a book. Authorship was, for many a day, a bad trade, and even yet, it is a poor profession for all but the masters or popular idols.

It was so poor a trade in olden times that no one seemed to think it worth while to retain property-rights in literary work. The first author who had "copy-money" in England, is said to have been Dr. Henry Hammond, for his "Annotations on the New Testament." That was in 1653, and the publisher who gave the "copy-money" was Royston, the King's printer. Just about the same time, the first book published by subscription was issued in the form of a Polyglot Bible.

The story of Milton's "Paradise Lost" has often been told, and, usually, mis-told. As a matter of fact, Milton and his family received, from first to last, not five pounds, but eighteen pounds, for the copyright of three editions. This was not much, certainly; but, as the publisher resold the copyright for twenty-five pounds within seven years, it is a fair presumption that he had not found it a very profitable investment. And Milton was one of the first poets, if not the very first, to receive any copy-money at all for his works.

Such is the irony of fate that within fifty years or so after Milton's death, Bentley received one hundred guineas for editing the work for which the poet and his family received only eighteen pounds! While, still later, Bishop Newton netted six hundred and thirty pounds for editing the work anew.

"All this for a song!" as Cecil, Lord Barleigh, exclaimed, when Queen Elizabeth sent a hundred pounds to Edmund Spenser, then in the penury common to poets.

It is a common habit to comment on the folly and ignorance of publishers, but

it is safe to assume that they know their own business a great deal better than the critics can do. The bookseller who would not risk more than five pounds on a first edition of "Paradise Lost," was wise in his generation, for, as a matter of fact, his generation would not buy the poem.

William Taylor, of Paternoster Row, who gave sixty pounds for "Robinson Crusoe," was more adventurous, and also more successful. It is said that he cleared fully one thousand pounds out of the earlier editions of a book of which editions are now innumerable. Yet, if Taylor had been far-seeing, he would have clung to the copyright to the last.

There is this interest about "Robinson Crusoe" in connection with American publishers and copyrights—that it was the first book, or one of the first books, of which "pirated" editions were circulated during its earlier successes. Four such "pirates" are said to have been floated during the first year of its publication.

There was no real protection against such knavery until the Copyright Act of Queen Anne was passed; and even then the "pirates" merely moved across St. George's Channel. It is not generally known, perhaps, that the Act of Union destroyed a nest of literary pirates, as well as a Dublin Parliament—a fact which some people would do well to remember when inclined to denounce the Irish Union.

That publishers occasionally make mistakes, is but to say that they are human. Dodsley, it is said, refused to give Sterne fifty pounds for "Tristram Shandy," and eventually was glad to pay him six hundred and fifty pounds for the right to the second edition only.

Some of them ran to the other extreme in paying Oliver Goldsmith for works which he never even began. Dodsley made another mistake in refusing to have anything to do with Miss Burney's first novel, "Evelina." She eventually sold it to another publisher for twenty pounds; and he must have made hundreds, if not thousands, out of it.

The whole history of literature shows that there is as much uncertainty about publishing as about authorship. No one could foresee that when Professor Robertson accepted six hundred pounds for his "History of Scotland," he would by that work make it worth while for a publisher to give him four thousand five hundred pounds for his "History of Charles the Fifth," a now much less known book.

Gibbon had, if we mistake not, to bring out the first volume of his "Decline and Fall" at his own expense; yet he is said to have cleared six thousand pounds before he finished for the copyright. He would have made more had he retained the copyright.

Then, contrast Hume, who received two hundred pounds for the first two volumes of his "History of England," with Macaulay, who received twenty thousand pounds for the first two volumes of his.

The fine old economic law of supply and demand operates in the industry of book-making, as in every other branch of human effort. The element of speculation enters there also, as it does into all branches of money-making. Luck counts for much in the literary world. It is certainly bad luck for an author—who makes a hit, with the chance of making a fortune in the Old World—to find his work—his pride, and hope, and joy—being sold by the hundred thousand in America, without the return of a single penny to him.

This is piracy and robbery, and it is proper to say that it is a system not supported by the respectable class of American publishers. What American publishers, as a class, say is, that the American people are only buyers of cheap books; that they will not give the prices asked and obtained for popular works in this country. That being so, they claim the privilege of reproducing English works in a manner to suit the American market; and that is why the new copyright law makes it a condition that the works in which exclusive property is claimed, shall be mechanically put together in America.

It is not an altogether agreeable condition; but half a loaf is better than no bread, and English authors may welcome any relief from the depredations of the pirates.

WISTFUL.

DEAR, it is hard to stand
So near thy life, yet so apart;
So near—I think so near—thine heart;
So near that I could touch thine hand,
And yet so far I dare not take
That hand in mine for love's dear sake!

So near that I can look my fill
At stated times upon thy face;
So far that I must yield a place
To others, sore against my will!
So near that I can see thee smile,
So far, my poor heart aches the while!

Dear, it is hard to know
 Whatever the stress, the storm, the strife,
 The fret, the sadness of thy life,
 I have no power, no right to show
 Love in my heart, love on my lips,
 To comfort thee in life's eclipse;

No right to claim before the rest,
 The privilege to weep with thee;
 No right, across life's stormy sea,
 To bid thee welcome to my breast;
 No right to share thy hopes, thy fears,
 Through all the weary, weary years.

Dear, it is hard to feel
 That bliss may meet thee, full and fair,
 Wherein poor I can have no share;
 That thy wide future may reveal
 The joys of harvest manifold,
 While I stand lonely in the cold.

Dear, it is hard. But God doth know
 How leal the heart that beats for thee;
 It is enough, enough for me
 To love thee. Let the future show
 Love can live on for its own sake,
 Though eyes may weep, though heart may
 ache!

THE LAND OF DUMPLINGS.

UNTIL within comparatively recent years the Land of Dumplings was almost a terra incognita. Adventurous sportsmen, it is true, knew it as a paradise where pheasants and partridges ran about begging to be killed, and where, at the risk of laying the seeds of consumption and getting immediate rheumatic fever, unlimited wild fowl might be shot in the marshes and fens. But, by the rest of the world, this land was held to contain no attractions that could make it worth the trouble of a four hours' journey from town. The scenery was believed to be dreary, flat, treeless, and bleak; the east wind blew the whole year round; the people were but one degree removed from savagedom.

In short, this country was only known to civilised people by certain specialities it produced in the way of edibles, some of which were appreciated by dwellers in Cockneydom itself, while others could only be relished, to say nothing of digested, by the barbarous natives of the land. Apoplectic-looking turkeys, thirst-producing bloaters, biffins—which, to the uninitiated, look like rotten apples squashed flat—are exported in enormous quantities from this region. Dumplings—most characteristic product—are but seldom met with outside the land of their invention. And here it should be premised that these delicacies must never be confounded with the vulgar suet-dumpling and the insipid apple-dumpling. The dumpling proper is made "off the bread," being neither more nor less

than a solid ball of leavened dough, boiled instead of baked. It may be eaten either as a savoury or a sweet. In the former case it must be consumed with goose-gravy, in the latter, treacle is the correct accompaniment. As with olives, oysters, and caviare, an education—a liberal one—is required, to learn to love the dumpling. Some persons never acquire this taste, but are compelled to look on in envy and admiration as the native puts away a cannon-ball of boiled dough, washed down with two or three tablespoonfuls of the best "Golden Syrup."

A few years ago, unfortunately for the preservation of its quaint and original character, the Land of Dumplings was discovered. A learned Doctor wrote a book about it, under the more euphonious title of "Arcady." Then a poet wrote some verses about a certain spot in that land, which a composer set to music, and the song became the rage, insomuch that people were inspired with a longing to visit the place for themselves. It is my belief that nine-tenths of them made their wills, and set their affairs in order, before they took the train for "Poppyland."

Lastly, it was discovered that there was a lake-country situated in the Land of Dumplings, which, if not so romantic and picturesque as the lake-country in the north, was more quaint, more uncommon, and, at that time, more free from the trail of the tourist. Straightway, so many books and articles were written about it, that already quite a respectable literature exists on the subject of these "Broads," as they are called by the ignorant dwellers on their shores.

By this time the reader, who is blessed with a quick natural perception, may, perhaps, have guessed that the Land of Dumplings is also, and indeed more generally, known as the County of Norfolk. It is, alas, rapidly losing its primitive character; all its little peculiarities are being rubbed off, and people, country, and language alike will soon, it is to be feared, be ground into one smooth, commonplace, uninteresting likeness to other people, other countries, and languages. In the more remote parts of the Land are, however, still to be found spots untouched as yet by the tourist, unspoilt by the Board School.

Norfolk, thanks to its long isolated condition, has become in some sort a region by itself. Like all the larger English counties, it contains a variety of nations, speaking a variety of dialects, within its

borders. Of course, pre-eminent are two types—the big flaxen-haired Saxon, with his strong body and slow wits, and the small, lithe Norman, swarthy-faced and shrewd. To these may be added the red-haired Danes, a larger proportion of whom are to be found on the eastern coast than in any other part of the kingdom.

In 1331, Phillippa of Hainault brought over a large number of Flemish weavers, and established them in Norwich and the neighbourhood, notably at the little village which, to this day, bears the name of Worstead, though its weavers are a thing of the past. Two centuries later, no less than four thousand Dutch and Flemings fled from the persecutions of the Duke of Alva, and settled at Norwich, where, until within quite recent times, a Dutch service has been held on Sundays. Add to these a considerable number of Huguenots who came over after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and it will be seen that the population of Norfolk is a veritable "olla podrida" of nationalities.

In spite, however, of the strangely mixed blood that runs in the veins of the native, there are certain habits and characteristics which are shared by all the more primitive inhabitants of the Land of Dumplings. In the first place, then, it must be owned that, in spite of the ennobling influence of Board Schools, the Norfolk are still remarkable for their credulity and superstition. Their belief in ghosts, witchcraft, and the evil eye, seems quite ineradicable.

A curious superstition, and one which does not, I believe, exist in other parts of the kingdom, is that which has for its object the growth of stones. A labourer's wife once pointed out to me a large stone which stood by her cottage door, and solemnly assured me that it was twice as big as it had been when placed there a few years before. Moreover, a most respectable farmer of my acquaintance, a churchwarden to boot, was accustomed to argue that stones must grow; otherwise, how was it that a fresh crop came up every year and had to be picked off the land?

In spite of his credulity, however, the native of the Land of Dumplings is held by his admirers to possess rather more than his share of mother-wit. The following little incident, which occurred during the formation of the first militia regiment, in Norfolk, does not altogether bear out this theory. The initial attempt to drill the

yokels was given up in despair, because it was found impossible to make them understand and remember which was the right and which the left leg. At length, some bright genius hit upon the idea of tying a hay-band round one leg and a straw-band round the other. Then, to the cry of "hay-leg, straw-leg," drill went swimmingly.

One characteristic that the Northfolk have in common with the noble savage, is their inability—or it may be objection, to show surprise or delight. With them, "middling," or "tidy," are the highest terms of commendation. A small boy, employed to weed in the garden, was once presented with some delicious French sweets, which his master was unable to appreciate himself. When they had disappeared, he was asked how he liked them. "They ain't so mucky," was his reply. The probability is that his vocabulary contained no positive terms of approbation.

In spite of his stolidity, however, the Norfolk man is talkative enough after his own peculiar fashion. When you begin a conversation with him, his words come out so slowly and grudgingly that you fancy each will be the last. But you speedily discover your mistake. His fount of conversation is like one of those tiny rock springs in which water rises and falls one drop at a time. The words of your interlocutor have, after a time, much the same effect upon your mind as the continual dropping of water has upon the rock.

The tongue of the Norfolk woman, on the other hand, runs without any let or hindrance. She is a past mistress of invective, understands dramatic effect, and hurls about long words with a fairly correct aim. She prefers "ruminates" to "think;" "accumulate" to "save;" and "congregate" to "meet together." A few lapses she is guilty of. A row or a muddle is expressively described by her as a "reg'lar rendez-vous," sometimes varied by a "how-d'ye-do." The most dread and mystic of all her expressions, however, is the passive verb "to be quakkled," which seems to mean to be choked, or suffocated.

The Norfolk, whether male or female, are apt to pride themselves upon their humour and their power of repartee, the latter being usually of the "tu quoque" order, and of about the same consistency as their own dumplings. The words "rum," "funny," and "ridiculous," are

used to describe anything that is strange or objectionable. For example, in a wet week towards the end of August you may often hear the remark, "Funny weather for the harvest, isn't it?" while the most desperate blackguard in the village is generally termed "a funny man." A difficult or unaccustomed piece of work is "a rum job;" and objectionable behaviour on the part of a neighbour is stigmatised as "quite ridic'ulous."

Churlishness is rather a part of the Norfolk labourer's manner than of his nature. To find churlishness at its height we must go to the small farmer, who takes a genuine pleasure in refusing anything he is asked, even where it would cost him nothing to grant the request. He refuses to allow the primroses to be picked off his banks, the blackberries off his hedges, the watercress out of his ditches. One brilliant specimen of this class was once asked to give some Christmas (holly) for the church decorations. The answer he returned was simple, but sufficient: "Parson should grow his own Christmas."

In the villages that are thickly scattered over the surface of the Land of Dumplings there is no social life. The Squire may or may not be on speaking terms with the Parson; there are always plenty of matters for them to squabble over. The Parson has nothing in common with the (usually) ignorant farmers, who regard him simply as a devourer of tithes. A great gulf is fixed between the yeoman and the tenant farmer; as also between the occupier of five hundred acres, and the occupier of one hundred. The proprietors of the little general shops hold themselves superior to the labourers, while even among the latter there are distinct "sets." The shepherds, team-men, and barn-men, or rather their wives and children, do not care to be intimate with the families of the thatcher, the rat-catcher, or the men who "go with the engines."

Of amusement there is next to none in village life. The young men may play a little cricket between "hayseel" and harvest, when the days are long and work is over in good time. There is probably an occasional concert or meeting during the winter; but, as a rule, church and chapel-going forms the only excitement in the lives of the peasants. The Norfolk labourer considers himself an excellent judge of a sermon. On a Sunday afternoon (he seldom puts in an appearance in the morning) he lounges through the

prayers, takes a languid interest in the hymns; but if the preacher is anything of an orator, he will hang upon his lips, and discuss the sermon afterwards with as much interest as his betters might a new novel or a new play.

That the Land of Dumplings has produced many great minds of widely differing kinds may be proved by merely pointing to such names as Nelson, Rajah Brooke of Sarawak, Dr. Crotch, the composer and theorist, Harriet Martineau, the "clever Taylors" with their brilliant descendants, Mrs. Austin and Lady Duff Gordon, to say nothing of the Norwich school of painters, "Old Crome," the two Cotmans, Stannard, Stark, and others of lesser note.

It must be allowed that the natives have a sufficiently high opinion of their own intellect and virtue. They are fond of calling their southern neighbours by the opprobrious name of "Suffolk Sillies;" while, if any crime of unusual magnitude is committed in their midst, they calmly attribute it to "some furriner from the Shires."

To turn from people to places, it may be said that the Land of Dumplings contains almost as many types of landscape as it does of race. The only kind of scenery of which it possesses no sample is the rocky and mountainous. Against this, however, we may set the scenery of the "Broad," which is certainly unique in its way. The old superstition, that Norfolk is an ugly county, is now nearly exploded; but if any one still believes in it, let him pay a visit to Cromer and its neighbourhood — the Poppyland of the poet — and we prophesy that he will speedily become a convert to the true faith.

Of late years, railway contractors, builders, and tourists have done their best to ruin Cromer; but they can never succeed in quite destroying her charm, at least in the eyes of the natives. Cromer will always remain the Paradise where good Norfolk Dumplings go when they die. True, the good old days are past, when the nearest station was twenty miles away, and the visitor drove from Norwich to Cromer, on a well-horsed coach, through the dusk of the summer evening, changing horses at that most old-world of little towns — Aylsham, finally being turned out into Jetty Street in pitch darkness, and left to find his way to his lodgings as best he might. Those lodgings

were, in all probability, in the churchyard, and the address of the visitor was "John Smith, Esq., The Churchyard, Cromer," which was rather suggestive of an epitaph on the door-plate.

It must be admitted that in those good old days, the drains were in a somewhat primitive state; there were, occasionally, free fights over the one butcher's one leg of mutton; while at five o'clock p.m., the announcement might be made that there was no more milk in Cromer. But what mattered such trifles as these, in comparison with the delights of absolute freedom, life-giving air, hard white sands that presented the most perfect of playgrounds, and woods and heath-covered downs, that stretched down to the edge of the cliffs! The only wonder was that the serpent was kept out of Eden so long. In this case, it was Adam who fell; and the apple was a golden one. Cromer is now like a country beauty, who has tasted the admiration of smart visitors from town; she has grown self-conscious, and lost much of her natural charm. Hard though it be to say it, in July and August Poppyland is just a little vulgar. Blazers and deerstalkers promenade the shady lanes, while the lighthouse hills, and the beautiful woods of Felbrigg, Beeston, and Sherringham grow crops of gingerbeer bottles and paper bags.

In September and October Cromer comes to her senses, and then the natives repair to her, to spend the fine Indian summer of the east-country among her beautiful surroundings. Therefore, you who read these lines, if you be of alien blood, keep away at this season of the year. Let us who have known and loved our Cromer in her early freshness and innocence, enjoy what is left to her of charm in her old age.

A CUP OF MALVOISIE.

WITH the name of Malmsey, or Malvoisie, comes back to our remembrance that unfortunate Clarence, who, loving good liquor well in life, had, in death, rather too much of it. Some say that—half in jest, and half in earnest—he chose his manner of death himself, in order, "for once," as he said, "to have enough." Be it as it may, the name is suggestive. Reflected in the clear liquid that to-day is so rarely heard of in our beer-loving island, strange fleeting pictures seem to come and go.

The dark chamber in the Tower, and the fair face of "false, perjured Clarence," melt into the green arches of Sherwood Forest; and we see the jolly smile of Friar Tuck over his venison pasty, and flask of Malvoisie; or, again, some old baronial castle gate rises before us, and a fair lady hands a stirrup cup of good Malvoisie to her knight before he rides away. A flavour of romance lingers round the wine, and to many of us it is the only flavour known. A cup of Malvoisie is called for in a new old ballad, much as a roasted peacock is dished up by a modern medieval romancer. And yet in this prosaic nineteenth century, you may enter the poorest wine-shop of a certain little Portuguese village, and calling for "um copo de Malvasia," take a draught of a clear brown liquid, the rare aroma of which will recompense you for your fatigue in search of it, and strengthen your inner man for further exertion beneath a Portuguese sun, while leaving your brain as cool as if you had drunk water.

Observe with what generosity we lay all this information at the feet of the gentle reader! And yet what dust we swallowed; what pounds of our too solid flesh did melt; and what aching feet were contained in our boots, by the time we subsided into the creaking wicker chairs, among the dust and cobwebs which formed an æsthetic haze about the bottles of good liquor in Agostinho Gomes' wine-cellar!

It was a brilliant September afternoon, when John V. Robinson—or, as he was frequently styled by his intimates, "Melancholy Jacques," on account of the "most humorous sadness" with which "the sundry contemplation of his travels" furnished him—set forth from Cintra on foot, in quest of the village of Collares, and of the marvels which might lie upon the road, accompanied, instructed, and enlivened by the author of this paper.

Away up in the sunlight, shining above the pines and the giant boulders on the mountain side, was the castle tower of Pena, and but little below were the battle-mented walls of the Moorish castle.

Far down the valley rolled the waves of vegetation: vine trellises hung heavy with fruit, and, through their green tendrils, left glimpses of heaps of scarlet tomatoes lying gathered together on the earth; and between the mountains and the valleys—looking away over the bare, scorched plain, intersected by gleaming roads, towards the

glittering bosom of the Atlantic—nestled the little town of Cintra, fair to see, as we saw it from a bend of the road before losing it from view.

"Cintra is very much like the Sleeping Beauty just awaking," quoth melancholy Jacques; "only it is a thousand pities that they ever disturbed her slumbers."

"How so, good Monsieur Melancholy? Beauty asleep is a fair sight, but apt to grow monotonous; beauty awake may be useful as well as ornamental."

"I have always had my doubts about the advisability of awaking Sleeping Beauties when they have attained such a ripe age as that one in the fairy tale. The young-old lady would probably become conscious that her manners and customs were as far behind the age as her costume, and, bent upon an outward reformation at all hazards, would cut off her superfluous hair and do it up in a bang or a frizz, or whatever may be the present name, and put on paint and powder in order to resemble her more modern sisters; but, not being to the manner born, would probably out-Herod Herod, squeeze her waist into fourteen inches, and wear large plaids of violent colours."

"And on her lover's arm she leant,
And round her waist she felt it fold,
And far across the hills they went,
In that new world which is the old,"

quoted I.

"What an insult to the shade of Tennyson to imagine the lovely princess going over the hills, with her lover's arm enfolding a fourteen inch waist clothed in a startling plaid. But what has she to do with Cintra?"

"She is Cintra in the flesh. Look at those grey-battlemented heights, where the ivy and geranium grow up into trees and bushes on the walls. Look at those terraced gardens climbing the hill-side; cisterns empty and moss-grown; seats where the monks sat in the shade of their chestnut-trees, discussing the fortunes of Vasco de Gama and the possibility of a new world beyond the sea."

"Away behind the town rise the old palace walls in their Moorish architecture, grey with age. Convent and quinta, cottage and street, all date from a previous age of culture; and here are the traces of the long slumber that fell upon the place, in the broken walls, and deserted palaces, grass-grown walks, moss-covered statues and defaced azuleijos. A beauty Cintra was, and is; but, either she should not have fallen asleep, or never waked."

"It was probably the shriek of the railway-engine which broke the spell, and awoke the beauty from her slumbers; but to my mind she is none the worse for being awakened."

"None the worse? She has been dead to the world too long to remember the rules of good taste, and is decking herself with hideous gewgaws, and ruthlessly tearing away the ancient ornaments which suited her so well. Where is the beautiful fountain whose streams fell into sculptured marble shells in the market-place? Gone, to make room for the omnibuses, like locomotive four-post beds, which jostle the carts before the palace-gates. Look at the villas which crowd round the railway-station! Stucco atrocities! And did any other country ever dream of painting its houses in broad stripes of glaring colours all over? A red house, painted all glaring scarlet, may tone down in time, to the grief of the native Portuguese; a blue one fades into grey; a green one—well, even that, if it be not too verdant, may pass; but stripes——!"

The idea, and the sight in the distance of various eligible residences adorned in this manner, with stripes of violent colours of about half a yard in width, was always too much for the equanimity of John V. Robinson, who, turning his back upon these abominations, put on the pace so energetically that it was not until he was half-way up the steep hill of Seteais, or seven sighs, that the infirmities of the flesh became manifest to him, and he discovered that he was out of breath.

It did not improve his humour that just at this moment the trotting of donkeys' hoofs was heard, mixed with the harsh, unmusical tones of the Portuguese female voice; and round the corner swept a typical Cintra cavalcade. Evidently visitors from Lisbon for the day, and "doing" Pena, Montserrat, and the lions of the place. The ladies were, as usual, all seated on the wrong side of their mules in saddles without horns or stirrups, and with wooden rails, and flopped helplessly and inelegantly up and down with every step of the animals. The latest Paris fashions, according to Portuguese interpretation, adorned their persons, and I involuntarily thought of my companion's description of the awakened beauty as the violent colours and patterns, and hideously unbecoming costumes, jogged past me.

"Horrible!" ejaculated melancholy Jacques, with a sigh. "Now you behold

the fruits of modern civilisation! A hundred years ago these donnas would have had short petticoats, exposing their feet; and mantillas, or kerchiefs, half concealing the face; so that you only saw a pair of bright eyes and imagined the rest. Hence the tradition of the beauty of the women of the Peninsula. Now they cover their feet, which are often the only beauty they possess, and expose their faces, which would be better hidden. My friend, the senhora, who rode last and whose donkey was most heavily weighted in that cavalcade, is the proud possessor of a moustache, which you may envy, but can't emulate. . . . And they had been feasting upon garlic, too," he concluded, pensively, as I continued silent.

His innuendoes, with regard to my hire-sute appendages, were beneath contempt.

"Hah!" I exclaimed at length, with malignant joy, as a certain well-known sound struck upon my ear. "Now we are coming up with a relic of the past. Make much of it, for I am sure it has suffered no change for the last two thousand years."

I was too much excited to trouble about a few cyphers in a date. With every turn of the road the noise came nearer.

The sound in question is an indescribably-hIDEOUS discordant wail, rising from a groan to a screech, and sufficient to delude the inexperienced traveller into the belief that he has heedlessly wandered into one of the back lanes of purgatory. A few more turns of the road and our voices are drowned now in the rising and falling din, and we come upon a great cloud of dust, through which, as through a halo, oozes this distracting howling.

It is produced, as well I know, by that ancient and poetically-rudimentary creation, a Portuguese country cart, or rather carts, for there are four of them, piled high with furze and bracken for fuel; each drawn by two oxen, and rolling upon two wooden wheels, composed, apparently, of rounded blocks, with a hole in the middle. At every turn of the wheel, the hard edges of the unpainted, unoiled wood, grating upon one another, run through the whole excruciating gamut.

Meanwhile, the waggoners walked behind, courteously greeting us.

They were calm and unassuming—not puffed up by any unseemly pride, although they must have known that no other such unearthly groanings could be heard for miles around. Their carts were in good

travelling condition. They made themselves heard. Luck must follow.

It was in vain, some years ago, that some unpatriotic Portuguese pretended that the ears of his countrymen could be offended by this music, and actually legislated against it, forbidding the squeak with the cart, and the cart with the squeak.

It was no use. A cart without a squeak was contemptible, not to be thought of; and the law fell into abeyance, and the carrossa squeaks triumphant.

This music had resounded "through the heart of these lone hills" for generations; and I eloquently discoursed upon the subject to John V. Robinson, and begged him not to hurry on on my account, but to remain and wallow in antiquarian delight, while I went on before to find the village of Collares.

He gazed at me with lack-lustre eye, and then suddenly went mad, dashing past the astonished waggoners with a series of flying leaps, and never stopping until he had put at least half-a-mile between them and him.

By the time I reached him he was apparently engaged in an animated conversation with an inoffensive-looking stranger.

I should have taken the latter for an Englishman at once; but John V. Robinson was accustomed to say that there did not exist a modern Portuguese who, given the possibility, could resist the temptation of dressing himself like an English caricature.

I knew to the contrary; but with characteristic amiability forbore to argue the point, particularly as John V. Robinson was a bigger man than I. I always admire true modesty; and when I meet a man of very strong opinions, and fists, a still small voice within me always admonishes me to be gentle and kindly with that man, and respect sincere convictions wherever I find them.

Rounding off a magnificent period in fluent Portuguese, of which the component parts appeared to be a little French, and a good deal of bad Italian, John V. Robinson remarked casually for my benefit in English: "I am just asking how much farther it is to Collares."

"Oh, is that it?" exclaimed the stranger in an unmistakable English tone. "I could not think what you were driving at. No; it is not very much farther. I have just been in at Montserrat, and am

going on to Collares; perhaps I may be of some use to you." He pointed below, to where the towers of Montserrat peeped out from among the verdure, and as we walked on gave us little bits of information as to the groups of houses or solitary villas on the way.

The road wound round the serra, sometimes sheltered by branching oak and cork trees, all draped by hare's-foot ferns; and here and there where a cool stream came rushing down the hillside, a fountain, ornamented with azuleijos in the ancient Moorish fashion, offered refreshment, and the stone seats beside it rest.

It rather added to our enjoyment when seated in a cool shaded corner, made cooler by the soft drip and flow of water, and looking out over the wealth of vegetation in the valleys and combes, to see the great sunburnt, desolate plain beyond, stretching between the serra and the sea, where the hot air quivered over the burned earth in a scorching glare.

Here, where we sat, a cool breeze swept down from the hillside. How deliciously the pines swayed to and fro! how soft the slow monotonous drip of the water!

Had Don Joao de Castro, who built that strange old mansion yonder, and who had made his quinta on the very loveliest and steepest spur of the mountain—had he ever stopped to drink at this fountain centuries ago? He seemed to emerge from the shadows before my eyes, mounted on an Arab charger, with heavy brass stirrups like slippers all embossed with curious workmanship; and beside the Don a lovely lady, who cried to him in a strange, harsh voice, mingled with wails of grief:

"I say, old man, are you going to sleep here all day? There's that atrocious din of the cart-wheels coming near us. I'm off."

Had I been dozing? Confused and stiff, with the Don Joao de Castro and the lovely lady fading before the dusty road and the musical cart, I plodded after my companions.

The road grew dustier and hotter, and we hot and dusty with it: ever whiter as to costume and redder as to countenance at every step. Faster grew the pace, for it was down-hill now, and the carts were close upon us. Hill after hill was rounded, till, at last, turning a corner, we came upon a little village lying close in the hollow of the mountain, surrounded by quintas, orchards, and gardens.

Trees here hung heavy with fruit, and

roses climbed the walls and laid their cool, soft yellow cheeks languidly against the stones while they looked down upon the dusty traveller.

We followed our new companion to a sort of little square before the principal church. It looked as if it might be a market-place, but was not; for Collares does not even boast of a market. All her fruit and wine is packed into carts, or, on big baskets on donkeys' backs, and sent away around the serra to Cintra and Lisbon and such-like highly-civilised localities.

I looked in vain for an inn, or Casa de Pasto, as they are called;* but our new companion, with the serenest confidence, motioned us towards a kind of shed, or cellar, dark and frowy-looking even in that brilliant sunshine.

"What is in here?" asked John V. Robinson, sternly, stopping before the threshold, for he mistrusted that this young man was about to attempt some foolishness, and call it a practical joke.

"In here? The best wine of Collares. Oh Agostinho! Oh Senhor Agostinho!" and our friend entered, calling upon the name of the owner of this Arcadian bower.

A fat little man, with a merry round face and black eyes, came trotting towards us from the darkness.

"Bons dias, meus senhores! Tenha a bondade de entrar!" said he. "We are even now making the Muscatel wine. Would the senhores care to see the process?"

"Tenha paciencia, senhor!" said our new companion, with prudent gravity. "We will taste the wine first, and see the process after."

Senhor Agostinho laughed, his little black eyes twinkling, and his little black moustache curling up on his fat cheeks.

We looked around us for seats. Our eyes, unaccustomed to the darkness, could at first distinguish nothing but tuns and barrels; and then, as we turned our backs on the blazing doorway, where the light looked almost like white fire framed in blackness, we saw that high up the walls on both sides, and reaching almost to the bare, time-darkened rafters, were rows upon rows of bottles, dirty, covered with dust and cobwebs, and bearing labels of a more or less ancient date.

On one little shelf were a couple of

* Since this was written a grand new hotel has been started.

glasses, and another glass and a corkscrew were produced from some other corner.

An old wicker chair, such as are made in all the country side, was carefully adjusted to the unevenness of the floor, a three-legged stool was hunted up, and a packing-box stood on one end, and being thus luxuriously provided, Agostinho produced various bottles of curious liquors, which we, with all due gravity, made trial of.

"So this is the ancient Malvoisie—how do you call it here, Malvasia?" asked melancholy Jacques. "Surely that word means 'badly emptied.' Is it not so?"

"Agostinho tells me," said our new friend, "that the origin of this name was the discovery of a half-emptied cask, which had been forgotten, with the lees still at the bottom. This half-cask of liquor, 'malvasia'—badly emptied—having had longer time than usual on the lees, was found to have a particular flavour, and took its name from the accident. But whether this wine is really only of Portuguese origin, or whether the name is derived from another source, I am ignorant."

"In all cases of lack of information," I announced magisterially, "the ardent enquirer should write to 'Notes and Queries.' Just request information as to who paid the bill for that butt of Malmsey which Shakespeare gives us to understand was kept in the Tower, next door to Clarence's prison, and which was unlawfully diverted from its original purpose. You will see that some zealous seeker for, and disseminator of, useful knowledge will find a copy of the bill, with the name of the consignor, the place where the wine came from, and instructions as to the disposal of the 'returned empty.'"

Declining Agostinho's farther offers of Collares wine, Donna Branca, etc., etc., we announced ourselves now ready to see the process of the wine-making.

Agostinho therefore led the way through the barrels and boxes of his cellar to a dark little house behind.

How many years, or how many centuries, have passed since first these old stone troughs were placed there, who can say? They are dark and worn with age, and above them is a round tub, into which great heaps of grapes are being flung.

Agostinho gives us a bunch to taste. They are warm from the sunshine, and the full fruity flavour of the Muscatel is delicious to the taste. But, on the whole, I see the wisdom displayed by that young

man who said: "We will drink of the wine first, and see it made after."

A lively, dark-eyed Portuguese, with bare legs and feet, is standing up there in the tub preparing to dance upon the fruit, and squelch, squelch go his feet in the juice, and we see the wine beginning to gush out into the stone troughs below.

Some accidental chain of reasoning, curiously enough, set me calculating the present price of soap in the village, and wondering whether the strong symptoms of hydrophobia manifested by many of the Portuguese are indigenous to the race.

Quoth melancholy Jacques:

"Alas for lesser knowledge. One may drink, depart, and yet partake no venom, for his knowledge is not infected; but if one present the abhorred ingredient to his eye, make known how he hath drunk—"

"Oh, nonsense! fermentation cleanses all that," says our new friend, cheerfully. "I wonder how many vintages have passed since this wine-press was first erected? Look at that screw—eight feet high, at least, and as thick as a man's body—that should have seen good service, from its colour."

"It is very likely that these people do not know. It is most difficult to get the country people here to tell a date—they cannot read or write, as a rule—nor remember figures for long."

"It was Muscatel that Petruchio drank at his wedding," quoth melancholy Jacques. "But that will have come from Italian vines."

"Friends, let us be going. September days are short, and we have to foot it back to Cintra. There should be a moon; but Madame Phœbe is proverbially inconstant. Let us say good night, and be off. Adeus, Senhor Agostinho. Alé outra vez."

KESTELL OF GREYSTONE.

A SERIAL STORY.

By ESMÈ STUART.

Author of "*Muriel's Marriage*," "*Joan Vellacot*," "*A Faire Damzell*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XLVI. PUZZLED FRIENDS.

A WEDDING in a country place always gives much food for conversation. Indeed, the couple about to be wedded afford such an endless subject for friendly argument and discussion, that they deserve the thanks

of the small communities to which they belong for venturing on the unknown sea of matrimony.

The halo of mystery which had settled round Elva's first engagement made the announcement that she was engaged to Walter Akister, and that the marriage was to take place almost immediately, all the more interesting, and worthy of this full and minute discussion.

Mrs. Eagle Bennison was at her best, and, we might almost say, Miss Heaton at her worst. The former, because love and marriage were subjects she was well informed about, and the latter, because she was now sure that Herbert meant to marry Amice. She hoped, by abusing the one sister, to show her brother how to avoid the other.

George Guthrie had made his one attempt to stop Elva, and was now impenetrable when questioned by his cousin. He was painfully conscious of feeling that something was wrong, and yet quite unable to say what. That Elva was throwing away her happiness he did not doubt; but it was not worth while to argue this out with Mrs. Eagle Bennison, especially now that the day was settled, and that the female tongues were so happy over the "Do you think?" of conjecture.

The Squire's wife, in the fulness of her heart, had offered Court Garden and all it contained to forward the marriage. It is so easy to be intensely generous when you are quite, quite sure your offers will be rejected.

"My dear George, you will be immensely useful to the Kestells. My choicest flowers are going down for the wedding-breakfast. At least, I have offered them; but I thought you would just see, before I order them to be cut, whether Lord Cartmel had not already sent enough. Besides, Mr. Kestell can afford to order them from Covent Garden, and it does ruin one's greenhouse for the rest of the spring if one strips it of flowers at this time."

George was in his most perverse mood.

"I assure you, dear coz, that Lord Cartmel is just now most busy calculating the relative weight of oxygen and hydrogen in so many square feet. He then means to divide the one by the other and bring them to something else. There is not a chance of his thinking of flowers."

"But that stupid Betta, won't she think of it? However, you'll see, George; and do your best to save my flowers, there's a good fellow."

"Indeed, I will. I don't think the bride or the bridegroom will care much. Walter Akister has no more idea of admiring the beautiful than a buffalo; and Elva, well she is somewhat distraught I notice. Is that the right thing for a bride to be?"

"Ab, yes!" said the good lady, lifting her eyes to the ceiling. "I remember—Oh, George, such memories are sacred!"

"Of course, except on special occasions, never brought out, I suppose, from the sacred shrine. Never mind me, cousin, if you have the least wish to air these memories. I am a bachelor, you know, so I haven't the ghost of an idea what nuptial feelings may be. I have the logical mensurative faculty which Carlyle despises; you, on the contrary, recognise symbolic worth; you can see, in Walter Akister, now that he is about to become the husband of a fair woman, all the worth which for years has been hidden from you and from the rest of the world."

"Dear George! you are so funny. Of course Walter will be Lord Cartmel some day, when his father has done stargazing, and then Elva will fill the position of Lady Cartmel so well; besides, she ought to be glad to get another offer so soon after that contretemps."

"Humph! Yes; delicate affairs are best expressed in French. Honestly, I think Elva is throwing herself away, in spite of the "straps, tatters, and tagrags" of nobility which she will acquire."

"Oh, George, what will my husband say to hear you talk so? Are you, now really and truly—are you getting at all Liberal in your opinions? If you are, John must show you that nothing is so bad as believing in the lower orders. I took all the trouble of getting up the T.A.P.S., so that every one might know that dear old England depends on its country gentlemen."

"It's a fine country," said George Guthrie, solemnly, "a very fine country is England, and a very interesting people are the English. Duenna cousin, believe me, I am not a Radical. I honestly believe in an Englishman—gentleman, I mean—and when I see him standing on his two legs, with his two five-fingered hands at his shackle bones, and miraculous head on his shoulders, yes, then I believe he is worth from fifty to a hundred—"

"Wedding-presents," said Mrs. Eagle Bennison, dreamily, who had not been able to follow George's nonsense, as she

called it. "George, instead of talking this rubbish, tell me, will a silver cream-jug look shabby to give to Elva? I can't put off giving her something any longer. It is a really old silver jug. It came from one of the Eagles, and the antique look is much valued just now. It feels heavy, too, but the truth is that it has been mended with pewter, which adds to the weight; but, of course, it also adds to its interest, doesn't it?"

"Not to the interest Elva could get on it, supposing she pawned it."

"Pawned it! How ridiculous you are. Elva, who is as rich as Croesus, wishing to pawn anything, is an odd idea! But, indeed, I have such a strong feeling that it is a waste of money to give presents to rich people when the poor live all round us."

"Or die all round us. Yes, certainly, I agree with you. I should tell Elva quite plainly that I meant to spend twenty pounds on her present, but that I know she will prefer the cheque going into Herbert Heaton's bags next Sunday, and that she must value the pewter-mended silver jug as a memorial of the gift in church."

"No, one could not say all that; for such feelings are of course quite religious. Yes, I feel it quite a higher call to give to the poor."

Mrs. Eagle Bennison privately thought she would now not ask George's opinion any more, as he gave it too literally.

"By the way, George, what has become of Mr. Kestell's protégés? I never see either of them now."

"Like other protégés, they suffer from patronage. Only to-day I heard that Jesse Vicary has come down to Rushbrook out of work, and that he is staying at the Joyces'. Poor old Mrs. Joyce makes quite a fuss about the honour. I haven't met him yet. The girl is in London. I can't think why she does not come down. Benevolence never stands contradiction. If the Taps turned against you, what would you do to them, Mrs. Eagle Bennison?"

"I should, of course, show them how wrong it is not to honour and obey their superiors; but, happily, that spirit has not come here. That young Vicary looked conceited. Mr. Kestell was too good to him. He's very much aged, lately—Mr. Kestell, I mean; he's breaking up, I fear."

"Elva is marrying to please her father,

so he must live and see his handiwork. Parents are selfish beings. Well, I'm off to see Miss Heaton. They will want to decorate the church for the bride's arrival at the altar of Hymen. Her empyrean eyes must look at nothing mean—I can suggest your orchids, coz—she must be embowered amid rich foliage to hide her tremors and her flutterings. Aurora must have her garlands."

"Oh, but I don't believe High Church people think it quite right to decorate for brides," said Mrs. Eagle Bennison, seizing a long-forgotten plank of safety. "No, George, don't offer my orchids; or if you do, say you don't suppose they would like them."

"Of course," said George, seizing his hat. "You are clever to remember Heaton's points of ritual; I had quite forgotten it. They ought to be printed clearly on cards, like the deaf and dumb alphabet. Now, really, I'm off. I can't be sure of succeeding about the orchids; Miss Heaton is certain to find a saint, black or red, who will serve as a peg for votive flowers; but I'll try and spare your best. However, be generous, dear coz; put yourself in her place. What does our poet say?—'As though a rose should shut and be a bud again.' Try the metamorphosis. Remember your time of budding."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Eagle Bennison, smiling and blushing; "what a lovely simile! such a memory as you have, George! What poet is it who said that?"

George Guthrie went off down the fire-bordered path with a smile on his face; he noted the gorgeous red colouring on their stems with keen pleasure; and passing a holly-tree full of red berries, made a little moral reflection on fruit out of date. The object of his visit to Miss Heaton had in truth nothing to do with flowers; but he wished to see how much space in a little church could be set apart for the poor people. He knew Mr. Heaton might be placed in a difficult position if Mrs. Eagle Bennison and Mr. Kestell sent large orders for reserved seats, so that the aristocratic neighbourhood might see Elva married. As for Lord Cartmel, it was with difficulty the important day had been knocked into his head; Betta said gravely that her father was expecting a comet about that time, and it made him a little anxious as to a long absence from the observatory.

"There must be scientific men to be

some of all sorts," thought George, "but they are a very curious race. If Walter had chosen a kitchen-maid, his lordship would have had barely time to remonstrate. Well, it's not my duty. At present I'm bound from Tweedledum to Tweedledee."

When he reached the plantation that surrounded St. John's Church and Vicarage, he saw Mr. Heaton opening the gate, on his way home, and George Guthrie ran up to him. He had a bad habit of running like a boy, and had before now been reprimanded for this youthful folly by Mrs. Eagle Bennison.

"Here, Heaton, wait a moment. The world's at an end. Go and call the parson of the parish. Ah, perhaps you don't read Fielding, or don't own to it. The 'Fall of Phaëton' won't provide a text, will it?"

Herbert laughed. It did one good to see these two men together, they had nothing to hide from the world, or from each other.

"I have just been discoursing with Mr. Kestell's gardener about the floral arrangements of our little church on Thursday."

"I thought so—said so to my dear cousin. Of course, you've found it to be a black-letter saint's day; that makes flowers permissible."

Herbert smiled.

"Has Mrs. Eagle Bennison offered her flowers? Spare her, Guthrie, I know the sacrifice is too great! Miss Kestell has sent word she will have none, but the gardener says differently, so I must let them do as they like best, I suppose. To my mind this wedding is a sad business; I have had it much on my mind; but what could I do? Miss Kestell will see no one. My sister was refused; and when I called she begged me to excuse her. Come in, will you? I can show you her note."

George's face fell considerably.

"A sad business! I call it a confounded shame! If I could get hold of that—No, I'll spare your cloth, Heaton; but Hoel Fenner deserves the gallows."

"The affair is a mystery. For my part, I cannot accuse him without knowing particulars, and I know none. I only listen to those my sister invents. Ladies are apt to grow eloquent on such a subject. But have you noticed, Guthrie, that the person whose duty it is to speak out strongly, has never said a word. Mr. Kestell only once remarked to me that Mr. Fenner was quite unable to appreciate

his daughter's worth. When I saw them together I certainly thought the contrary."

George shook his head, and at this moment Miss Heaton appeared, and anxiously exclaimed:

"Oh, there you are, Herbert. How late you are! I knew you would be. Indeed, Mr. Guthrie, when Herbert goes to Rushbrook House there is no knowing when he will return."

"You must expect such troubles, Miss Heaton," answered George, wickedly; for he understood the severe lady's innuendoes. "He has been talking of love and marriage. You should have sent me. You remember Dr. Johnson's answer to the lady who asked him what love was? 'The wisdom of the fool and the folly of the wise.' I came now to plead for free seats for the ragtag and bobtail, Heaton. You should hear how the poor folk talk of the wedding; and, unfortunately, as the church is small, many will have to disappoint their eyes."

"I do not allow them to gossip to me about things that do not concern them," said Miss Heaton, severely. "The poor are abominably curious. They will go to any sight, and are quite indifferent whether it is a wedding or an inquest on a murdered man. I believe they prefer the latter."

"In this innocent pastoral district I am afraid we can't provide that; so, Miss Heaton, be merciful and wink at the weakness of the unwashed portion of the parish."

"It is all very well for a free lance like you, Mr. Guthrie; but they look to me for an example."

"'Tis indeed a post of observation, Miss Heaton. I do sincerely sympathise with you. Were I in your place I fear I should commit suicide. To be forced to think always of my character and reputation would—But no, I will not praise you. I will remember Bishop Beveridge (pray, Heaton, note that I am impartial in my quotations, and range from Fielding to Beveridge), the worthy prelate said: 'I resolve never to speak of a man's virtues before his face, nor of his faults behind his back.' By the way, if he did the opposite, I should have bidden him good-morning, and said 'au revoir' till we meet in a happier clime."

"Incorrigible!" laughed the Vicar, "but if you can come down to common sense, tell me whether you have heard of Jesse Vicary's being about. I met him just now, and really I should hardly have known

him. He avoided me, so I could not get speech with him."

"Out of work, I gather, and seems to think Mr. Kestell has something to do with it. The truth is, the poor fellow is rather proud. He's learning experience, which, by the way, I always find a great waste of time; for, like the stern lights of a ship, it only lights up what's behind."

"I must go now, Mr. Guthrie," said Miss Heaton, who looked upon him with barely disguised scorn. "There is to be a procession of school children on the wedding-day. I should like them to sing a hymn when the bride appears at the beginning of the plantation."

"Little dears, how they will wake the echoes with their sweet trebles. Do you remember, Miss Heaton, the difficulty a certain Bishop was in, how best to open the conversation with Johnson; so chancing to look at a few trees which stood close by, he remarked that they grew very large and strong. 'Sir,' said the doctor, 'they have nothing else to do.' Our school children can learn several hymns for the procession and the recession. That's right, isn't it, Heaton?"

Miss Heaton wanted to say, "What a foolish anecdote;" but she was not quite sure if Mr. Guthrie were laughing at her, so she retired with dignity, saying quietly she had never heard that story before, and it did not seem to have much point.

Herbert could not hide his amusement; but, as they walked out of the house, his real anxiety soon made him turn once more to the subject on his mind. Unlike his sister, he knew that, below all the fun and foolishness of the outside man, George Guthrie had a very true heart.

"I may be somewhat foolish, Guthrie," he said, "but I dislike reading the Marriage Service when I feel, 'To love, honour, and obey' means little or nothing."

"I have given up scruples, because the more one thinks of it the more it seems to me that civilised society is a sham. I never should have thought that old Kestell

was mercenary; and as to Elva—no, I'm sure she is not; but there is some powerful motive at work which baffles me. Mrs. Kestell rules them all; and, perhaps, she fancies that her daughter, having been mixed up with an unfortunate affair, had better accept the very next good offer; but, good gracious! if any one can afford to wait, it is an heiress."

"There is nothing pleasant about this engagement. Miss Amice answers all the letters about wedding presents; and, if she were a nun, Miss Kestell could not live a more secluded life. How am I to—but, look, Guthrie, who is that man walking up towards the Beacon? If you were to ask me I should say—Who would you say it was like?"

George Guthrie glanced up quickly. He was a little short sighted, but the same thought at once presented itself to him. The man they gazed at was walking very quickly towards the solitary cottage of the Joyces, which stood high on the slope of the Beacon.

"By George, Heaton! I should say it was Hoel Fenner!"

"So should I. But it hardly seems to be the right moment for his appearance!"

"And the wedding the day after tomorrow. I call it an unseemly thing to do. If you'll excuse me, Heaton, I'll go and find him."

"No, no; wait till we are sure. Besides, what can you say?"

George Guthrie laughed.

"Thank you; of course, for a moment I forget my principle of *laissez-faire*. Perhaps his appearance is another sign of the goodness of Providence. Do you remember the itinerant preacher's remark, 'My friends, it is another instance of the goodness of Providence, that large rivers always flow by large towns'?"

Herbert Heaton smiled, but added:

"Guthrie, I cannot understand my own feelings; but I have a presentiment of evil, a strong presentiment. I beseech you, weigh your words if you meet Hoel Fenner."